

MUSEUM NEWS

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THE OPEN AIR BREAKFAST, DETAIL

WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE (1849-1916)

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

SEVEN AMERICANS

THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTIONS of American painting have been recently augmented by the acquisition of five pictures by contemporary artists, and examples by two of their distinguished forerunners. The contemporary paintings were all acquired from the Museum's Fortieth Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, held this summer, and continue our long tradition of not only exhibiting contemporary American art, but acquiring examples for the collections from these annual 'Summer Shows.' There have been only seven years in the Museum's fifty-two year history when examples of contemporary art have not entered the collections.

The Museum is also continuing to build up its representation in the field of American painting before the twentieth century. Two interesting works by late nineteenth and early twentieth century artists, both clearly illustrating the close relationship between American and European painting of the period, now add to the Museum's visual history of art.

Few American painters at the turn of the century combined public renown with such influence upon their own profession as William Merritt Chase (1849-1916). His activity as a painter covered portraits, landscapes, still lifes and genre scenes.

Born in Indiana, Chase lived most of his life in New York. He studied in Munich in the 70's and learned the slashing brushwork and dark tonalities of that then noted school. During his later European travels he came to admire Manet and the joyful light and color of Impressionism.

After his marriage in 1886, Chase often painted his family—surely it is they he observed in the garden of their New York home on a summer's day about two years later.¹ A favorite greyhound relaxes on the grass; Mrs. Chase and the first of their eight children are still at table, while one of her sisters reclines in a hammock and the other, holding a shuttlecock, assumes a Whistlerian pose before a 'Japanese' screen. Chase's lively and electric style relied on speed of execution and an original color sense which enabled him to record the fleeting moment flooded with brilliant light. He does not ponder on mood or character—the figures are important only as visual elements in a composition.

When Maurice Prendergast (1859-1924) returned from Europe in 1899 he was among the first American painters to know of the influences shaping the course of early twentieth century art. Most important of these was the work of Paul Cézanne, who had modified the broken

¹ The Open Air Breakfast; H. 36½" x W. 55½"; oil on canvas



STILL LIFE

MAURICE PRENDERGAST (1859-1924)

palette of Impressionism and developed a method of using color alone to construct solid forms and their spatial interrelations. Prendergast probably also knew of the Pointillists Seurat and Signac and of the Nabis, a group which included Bonnard and Vuillard.

In glowing watercolors and oils of seaside and park crowds an independent and characteristic style soon developed; color patches are isolated within heavy, simplified outlines or are used alone to note the shape of a profile or turning body. The rather flattened forms, complex arrangement of lines and rich, subtly disposed color often suggest mosaics or tapestry. His New England and New York scenes have a gaiety and charm which belies a life-long struggle against poverty and lack of recognition. During these years, when he worked with his brother

making frames in order to earn a living, his optimistic nature never turned away from his favorite themes, full of sparkling life.

Nearly all Prendergast's painting is based on open air observation—still lifes are rather rare subjects and the one which has entered our collection is unusual in technique as well.² A few large elements—a bowl of fruit, flower pot and bottle—have a bulk and arrangement in depth seldom found in the frieze-like outdoor scenes. Broad strokes of the brush define small surface planes and are placed next to one another, recalling his early admiration of Cézanne.

The picture dates from the later years of his life when a limited circle of patrons had begun to recognize the originality and importance of his work.



COLLISION BEND

CARL GAERTNER (1898-1952)

In addition to the paintings by Chase and Prendergast, the Museum has acquired contemporary paintings by William Congdon, Frank Duncan, Jimmy Ernst, Carl Gaertner and Karl Knaths.

Best known to Toledoans among these is Carl Gaertner. His painting dates from 1952, the last year of his life. A dramatic and powerful landscape, *Collision Bend* is a distinguished example of the culmination of Mr. Gaertner's art. Carl Gaertner was one of the great teachers of painting in America, and taught for more than 25 years at the Institute of Art in his native Cleveland. From 1947 to 1949, Mr. Gaertner instructed special painting classes at the Toledo Museum of Art.

Karl Knaths (1891-) is among the most lyrical colorists of contemporary American painting. His recent works have been semi-abstract forms based on compositions of objects simplified and reduced to their structural essentials. Knaths lives and works at Provincetown.

The other three paintings are by artists who, while still relatively young, have exhibited successfully in many national shows. William Congdon was born in 1912 and has spent most of the postwar years in Italy. His painting of Palladio's great church of the Redentore in Venice is an important example of his recent studies of atmosphere and of the rich, plastic quality of his paint. Frank Duncan (1915-) in his picture, *Middletown Pastures*, has painted a verdant country meadow with a complex interlacing of lines and forms which suggest sparkling sunlight and softly moving leaves. Jimmy Ernst, the youngest of the group, was born in 1920. His painting is essentially an abstract composition, a subtle study in muted colors and crisp patterns. Its title, *Cirque d'Hiver*, would suggest that this is the artist's impression of the great Paris Hall in which winter circuses and spectacles are held.

2 Still Life; H. 15¼" x W. 19½"; oil on canvas

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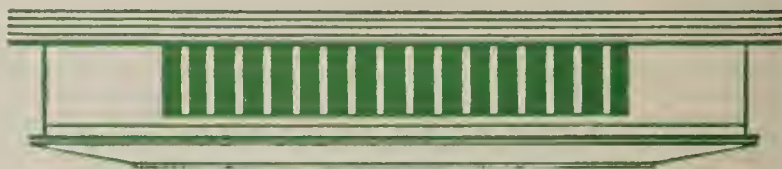
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EXHIBITIONS

Closing December 6

ART WORK BY EMPLOYEES OF THE TOLEDO BOARD OF EDUCATION

December 6-27

CHINESE EXPORT PORCELAIN—gift of the Winfield Foundation

December 13—January 3

PAINTINGS BY SISTER JANE CATHERINE

CERAMICS BY FLORENCE FLING

FREE SUNDAY AFTERNOON PROGRAMS

Dec. 6 2:30 Gallery Talk, French Painting Today

Film: HENRI MATISSE

3:00 Toledo Orchestra Junior Concert

Dec. 13 2:30 Gallery Talk, Braque and the Cubist Movement

Film: AN EXPERIENCE IN CUBISM

3:00 Eurydice Club

Dec. 20 2:30 Gallery Talk, The Christmas Story: A Timeless Topic
in Art

3:00 The Sanctus Choir